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I am providing both written and oral testimony today as a parent of a child with dyslexia. I read most if not all of the testimony offered last March of 2014 in support of Senate Bill 1054. It was comforting to learn that our "battle" to identify, and secure appropriate interventions for our daughter was a familiar one. Yes I chose the word "battle" rather than journey as that is what this family has experienced thus far. I thank all of you who supported the bill that got "Dyslexia" under "Specific Learning Disability" in the "Primary Disability" Section of a child's IEP. That was a wonderful 1st step in this battle I invite you to become a part of. Prior to that bill the topic of "Dyslexia" was immediately dismissed from any conversation with the schools in our district as we were told they couldn't diagnose it. Our story includes years of searching for how to secure and pay for a diagnosis. This obviously speaks to the need for early screening and early identification in the school. Did you know that schools are not obligated to accept outside independent assessments? This most certainly has also been our experience. In fact, at our daughter's most recent PPT they refused to check the newly legislated "Dyslexia" box on the form because they said they didn't know enough about it yet. We're here because our school doesn't know what to do with kids like Madeline, so they throw together a menu of reading interventions the school is familiar with, none of which are designed for kids with Dyslexia. When pressed to explain why she is half-way through 6th grade reading two years below grade level, the response is "we are only required to demonstrate that she making progress, albeit limited progress only obligated to show progress".

Our daughter Madeline testified for you earlier today. We are so proud of her bravery to do so, and are inspired by her interest in advocating for the needs of kids with Dyslexia. You are the folks with the power to support more comprehensive legislation. You are ones who can require our public schools to provide a practitioner that is certified in multisensory evidence-based interventions endorsed by the International Dyslexia Association. There are a multitude of methods that work for these kids (e.g Orton-Gillingham, Wilson, Lindamood-Bell, etc....). The intensity and structure of these programs can teach all kids to read, not just the ones with Dyslexia. Unilateral support for instruction with these methods, ensures dyslexics won't be left behind.

I trust that one day our story of advocacy will be re-branded from "battle" to "journey". Please support more comprehensive guidance. Your investment in these kids will change the world in countless positive ways. Thank you for taking the time to consider the testimony supplied on behalf of these amazing kids.

Jackie Soroka

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